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**WO 02/29506 A2**

(54) Title: METHOD, SYSTEM AND COMPUTER USABLE MEDIUM FOR FACILITATING COMMUNICATION

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to a method, system and computer usable medium for facilitating communication between two people with a common interest or desire. More particularly it relates to a method, system and computer usable medium for putting one person in touch with another person where those persons share a common interest or have a mutual desire to find one another. The method comprises allowing each person to access a system and complete one or more questionnaires; generating, for each person, at least one profile based on the one or more completed questionnaires(s); allowing each person to view at least one of the at least one generated profiles of the person or persons whose profile is considered compatible with their own profile; allowing one or each person to pay a fee to enable them to communicate with the person whose profile is considered compatible with their own profile; and on receipt of the fee, enabling said persons to communicate with one another.

## METHOD, SYSTEM AND COMPUTER USABLE MEDIUM FOR FACILITATING COMMUNICATION

### **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

5 The present invention relates to a method, system and computer usable medium for facilitating communication between two people with a common interest or desire. More particularly it relates to a method, system and computer usable medium for putting one person in touch with another person where those persons share a common interest or have a mutual desire to find one another.

10

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Various mechanisms exist for people to find other people who share a common interest or have a mutual desire to make contact with one another. For example, they can join clubs or advertise. Areas in which people seek to make contact with others due to a common interest or desire include, but are not limited to, the following areas: finding a partner or date; finding an employee or employer; and the sale and purchase (or exchange) of goods or services.

20 These existing methods are time consuming and rely on the respective people to do a lot of sifting in order to find what they are looking for. Thus, a need exists for a method or system to help people find the people or objects they are looking for by putting them in contact with the most appropriate people in an efficient manner.

### **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

25 According to the present invention there is provided a method for facilitating communication between two people (herein called users) with a mutual desire to make contact with one another. The method facilitates this communication by enabling each of the users to complete a questionnaire. A profile is generated for each of the users, based on the completed questionnaire. A match between first and second users is determined based on the completed

30

questionnaires. The first and second users are then enabled to view the profiles of one another. If either user desires to make contact with the other, a communication is enabled. If a requirement, such as a payment is required, the communication is not enabled until the payment has been satisfied. The  
5 communication may be established by and/or through the communications system of the invention.

Preferably, the questionnaire comprises questions relating to what or who the users are looking for. For dating and introductory services the questionnaire  
10 will comprise psychometric questions, biometric questions and location question. These questions are preferably presented in separate questionnaires. For other uses the question type can be varied according to the requirements.

15 Generally, where users are seeking other users and not objects, the questionnaire will comprise questions that are "compatibility sensitive" and questions that are "not compatibility sensitive". By "compatibility sensitive" is meant the questions will be critical to the matching process and by "not compatibility sensitive" is meant the questions will not be used to automatically  
20 reject a person as being incompatible.

Preferably, the questionnaire comprises first questions, the answers to which will be displayed on a user's profile that can be accessed by anyone using the system and second questions, the answers to which are used to generate a  
25 profile which will be made known only to the user completing the questionnaire.

Preferably, the location questionnaire enables the user to define one or several non-adjacent locations of interest.

In one embodiment, the location questionnaire is in the form of a map arranged on a grid comprising a network of vertical and horizontal lines. The user can select one or more of the areas within the grid as the locations of interest.

- 5 Preferably, the user can select the size of the areas within the grid.

Preferably, the psychometric questions are presented to the user one at a time and the user must answer each question in turn before the next question will appear.

10

Preferably, the psychometric questions are multiple choice questions that present a plurality of alternative answers to the user. The user must identify the most appropriate answer and the least appropriate answer to the question from the multiple alternative answers.

15

Preferably, the user must answer the multiple choice questions using a drag and drop operation. By forcing the user to respond in this way, the user is required to give more thought to the questions and answers than they might do if they were operating traditional buttons. By forcing the user to give more  
20 thought to the questions and answers the matching process is improved.

Preferably, the biometric questions seek information about the user who is answering the question and the person they are seeking.

- 25 The preferred method is a method for finding a partner or a date.

A system of the present invention includes a computer for facilitating communication between a plurality of users. The computer has a processor, a memory and a communications program stored in the memory. A first means  
30 controls the processor to perform a first operation that enables each of the users to complete a questionnaire. A second means controls the processor to

- perform a second operation that generates, for each of the users, a profile based on the completed questionnaire. A third means controls the processor to perform a third operation that determines a match between a first and a second user, based on the completed questionnaires thereof. A fourth means controls
- 5 the processor to perform a fourth operation that enables each of the first and second users to view the profiles of one another. A fifth means controls the processor to perform a fifth operation that enables the first and second users to communicate with one another.
- 10 A memory medium of the present invention includes a first means for controlling a computer to perform a first operation that enables each of a plurality of users to complete a questionnaire. A second means controls the computer to perform a second operation that generates, for each of the users, a profile based on the completed questionnaire. A third means controls the computer to perform a
- 15 third operation that determines a match between a first and a second user, based on the completed questionnaires thereof. A fourth means controls the computer to perform a fourth operation that enables each of the first and second users to view the profiles of one another. A fifth means controls the computer to perform a fifth operation that enables the first and second users to
- 20 communicate with one another.

The method, system and computer usable medium of the invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the detailed description. The scope of the invention however is limited only by the claims appended

25 hereto.

#### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING**

Other and further objects, advantages and features of the present invention will be understood by reference to the following specification in conjunction with the

30 accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters denote like elements of structure and:

Fig. 1 depicts a series of web pages presented to a user of the communication system of the present invention;

- 5 Fig. 2 is an example of a home page of a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

Fig. 3 is an example of a registration page of a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

10

Fig. 4a is an example of a questionnaire page of a psychometric questionnaire of a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

- 15 Fig. 4b is an example of a profile page of a psychometric profile generated by a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

Fig. 5a is an example of a questionnaire page of a biometric questionnaire of a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

- 20 Fig. 5b is an example of a profile page of a biometric profile generated by a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

Fig. 6 is an example of a questionnaire page of a location map of a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

25

Fig. 7 is an example of a log on page from a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

- 30 Fig. 8 is an example of an administration centre page of a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

Fig. 9 is an example of a communication centre page of a dating service provider employing the system of the invention;

Fig. 10 is a block diagram of a network in which the communication system of  
5 the present invention may be used;

Fig. 11 is a block diagram of the computer of the communication system of Fig. 10; and

10 Figs. 12 and 13 are a flow diagram of the communications program of the computer of Fig. 11.

#### **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION**

Referring to Fig. 10, a communications system (120) of the present invention  
15 includes a computer (122) and a database (124). Communications system (120) serves web pages via a network (126) to a plurality of users (128), identified as user A and user B through user N. Each user (128) may have a desktop terminal or any other type of terminal that has a browser capability. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the number of users is limited  
20 only by the capacity of network (126). Network (126) may be an intranet, an internet, the World Wide Web (WWW), WAP telephone, or other network or any combination thereof.

Network (126) facilitates communication among communications system  
25 (120) and users (128) in a protocol that is compatible with the browser capability of users (128). Computer (122) may be any suitable computer, presently known or developed in the future, that is capable of running applications that present web page data to users (128) and interact with web page actions taken by users (128). Database (124) may be any suitable  
30 database, presently known or developed in the future, that is capable of handling large amounts of data.

Referring to FIG. 11, computer (122) includes a processor (130), a communications unit (132) and a memory (134) that are interconnected via a computer bus (136). Stored in memory (134) are an operating system (138) and a communications program (140). Although operating system (138) and communications program (140) are shown as stored in memory (134), it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that these programs, as well as others, may be loaded into memory (134) from a memory medium interconnected therewith directly or indirectly via network (126). It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that computer (122) may comprise one or more computers and that communications program (140) may alternatively be distributed among one or more of such computers. The physical locations of computer (122) and database (124) are unimportant to the present invention. They may be in the same physical location or in separate locations that communicate via network (126) or any other communication facility. Processor (130) under the direction of operating system (138) and communications program (140) via network (126) provides web page data to and interacts with actions taken on the web pages by users (128).

Communications system (120) provides an interactive method for facilitating communication between two or more users (128) with a mutual desire, in this specific example illustrated herein, finding a potential date or partner.

Referring to Fig. 1, communications system (120) is accessed by a user (e.g., user A and/or user B) via network (126). By way of example, the process will be described for access by user A. Once connected to communications system (120), user A will arrive at a home page (20, Fig. 2) that presents a choice of what to do next. This choice depends on whether user A is a new visitor to the site. If so, user A will be directed to a registration procedure described with reference to Figs. 3, 4a, 5a, and 6. If a registered user, user A will be presented with a log on page (70, Fig. 7).



Referring to Figs. 1 and 2, from home page (20), user A has the following plurality of choices:

- 5           1. Move to an information page (not shown on the drawing), via a control button (22) to view more information about the site, the services offered and the company(ies) involved;
2. Move to a registration page (30-see Fig. 3), via a control button (24), inviting user A to register. (The registration procedure is described in  
10           more detail with reference to Fig. 3);
3. If user A is already registered, log on page (70) can be selected via a button (26), for presentation of a log on procedure and then move to user A's own personal administration centre or page (80); and
4. Contact the service provider of communications system (120) direct  
15           via a button (28).

In order to be able to obtain or access administration centre (80), user A will have to register. The registration procedure is illustrated in more detail in Figs. 3, 4a, 5a, and 6 and involves:

- 20           1. Accepting the terms and conditions of the site (or, if not prepared to do so, provide details of why not);
  2. Choosing a user name (32) (the name that will appear on the site with user A's public data) and a pass word (34) which they will need  
25           to gain access to user A's own administration centre (80); and
  3. Providing some personal details (36) (which will not be disclosed on the site, but which enable the site operator to verify user A's personal identity for administration purposes.)
- 30   When registration (30) has been completed, user A is presented with one or more questionnaires for completion. One or more profiles (Fig. 4b and 5b) are

generated from the responses given to the questions in the questionnaires. These profiles are an integral part of the matching process, and enable compatible matches to be proffered.

- 5 In the specific example of finding one person who is likely to prove compatible with another in the sense that each is looking for someone to date or become a partner there are three distinct questionnaires (Figs. 4a, 5a, and 6) and the data generated is used in two different ways. However, for finding a person or object for another person in a different field, for example object exchange (for  
10 sale/wanted) a single question type may be sufficient.

There are three sets of questions that may be offered in a single or in separate questionnaires for matching people with a view to finding a suitable partner.

These questionnaires comprise:

- 15                   1. A Psychometric questionnaire (40, Fig. 4a);  
                      2. A biometric questionnaire (50, Fig. 5a); and  
                      3. A location questionnaire (60, Fig. 6).

- Referring to Fig. 4a, psychometric questionnaire (40) comprises twenty-eight  
20 questions (41) that are presented to user A one at a time. Each question (41) is a multiple choice question that comprises a plurality of statements, in this particular example, four (42, 43, 44, 45), from which user A has to choose a "most" and a "least" appropriate answer describing user A by means of drag buttons (46) and (47), respectively. This form of questioning enables the most  
25 appropriate "match" to be made.

- Two additional aspects to this method of asking multiple choice questions are significant in obtaining the best possible "match" criteria. Firstly, the use of a "drag and drop" technique to answer the questions forces user A to read the  
30 statements more carefully than if the procedure were to merely press a button to indicate a "most" or "least" appropriate answer. The consequence of this is

that user A answers the questions more honestly, which, in turn, means the analysis or profiling of the data more truly reflects user A. This ensures that individuals, such as user A, matched by the process are more likely to be compatible.

5

Secondly, by presenting the questions in order and forcing the user A to answer the questions in turn they are unable to modify earlier answers in view of later questions. This means the answers more truly reflect the natural thinking of the user A. Because modifying an answer after the next question appears is not permitted, a sample question is provided at the beginning of questionnaire (40) for user A to practice on. Furthermore, since questionnaire (40) is quite time consuming to complete (and the number of questions have been devised to give rise to accurate profiling), communications system (120) comprises a "rest and return to site" facility to enable user A to complete the questionnaire (40) whilst fresh. This, too, ensures the questions are answered in the most appropriate way so as to give rise to the best possible match being made. Once the questionnaire (40) has been completed, communications program (140) analyses the results and, in conjunction with other data gathered elsewhere, generates a psychometric profile (48, Fig. 4b) which is presented or displayed in user A's personal administration centre (80). Psychometric profile (48) is personal to user A. User A, however, is free to communicate psychometric profile (48) to others through, for example, the communication centre (90), so long as a requirement, such as the payment of a fee has been satisfied.

20

Once psychometric questionnaire (40) has been completed, user A is presented with a biometric questionnaire (50, Fig. 5a). Biometric questionnaire (50) comprises two parts. The first part seeks biographical details on user A and the second part seeks information on what user A is looking for in an ideal partner. Biometric questionnaire (50) is presented in the form of a list into which specific answers are given.

30

Once completed, communications program (140) generates a biographical profile (52, Fig. 5b) for user A. Biographical profile (52) is passed onto the personal administration centres (100, Fig. 1) of other users, which communications system (120) matches to that of user A. A copy is also  
5 forwarded to user A's own personal administration centre (80) for review. User A's own preferences for a partner are taken into account in the matching process.

When biometric questionnaire (50) has been completed, user A is presented  
10 with a location questionnaire or location indicator (60, Fig. 6). In the case of the present invention location indicator (60) differs from conventional indicators which seek suitable matches in an area limited to a given radius from a person's home or specified localities, e.g. cities, counties, post code locations and the like. The conventional location indicator suffers from the problem that it does  
15 not take into account transportation networks or the possibility that people may be prepared to meet people in a plurality of distinct locations, for example, because they may work and live in different locations. Location indicator (60) of the present invention overcomes the above problem by presenting a pictorial representation of a map (62) arranged on a grid (not shown) comprising a  
20 network of vertical and horizontal lines. A plurality of discrete areas (64) formed by the intersecting vertical and horizontal grid lines can be selected or filled in by user A clicking on them. User A can also select the size parameters of the areas within the grid so as to define the area(s) of interest in the fewest number of mouse operations. The information obtained from location questionnaire (60)  
25 is used in arriving at potential matches.

In order that map (62) does not take on an uncharacteristic appearance around natural boundaries, e.g. the coastline, a masking means (66) is superimposed over those areas that constitute part land and part sea. Furthermore, those  
30 areas which border areas which are part land and part sea are programmed to

be "filled in" when an adjacent area is clicked or selected, thereby reducing further mouse operations.

Generally speaking, whatever the questionnaire(s), the questions will comprise

5 two general types:

1. Questions, the answers to which will be "match sensitive" and
2. Questions, the answers to which will not be match sensitive, "not match sensitive".

Communications program (140), when running the matching process, will only  
10 utilize the "match sensitive" question types.

When the respective questionnaires have been completed, user A will be directed to his or her personal administration centre (80, Fig. 8).

15 If user A had already been registered, user A will bypass the registration procedure and be directed to a log on procedure (70, Fig. 7) for entry of a password (34).

Referring to Fig. 8, once logged on, new and existing users alike gain access to  
20 their respective personal communication centres (80) where the following choices are available:

1. Access and view their psychometric profile (48) using a button (82);
2. Access and view their biometric profile (52) using a button (84)
3. Move to a page (90, Fig. 9), using a button (86) where they can access  
25 and view the biometric profiles of other users who have been selected as being compatible, i.e. they have been matched using communications program (140) of the invention.
4. Move to other sites or pages of possible interest, for example a news page via a button (87), an information/ advice page via a button (88) and  
30 a page offering promotions via a button (89). Alternatively, the user can return to home page (20).

Referring to Fig. 9, a communication centre (90) can enable user A to view the biographical details of a potential partner (92) identified by communications program (140) on the basis of the completed questionnaires of both user A and  
5 the potential partner. Here the profile of the potential partner can be viewed and user A's own comments, rating (94) etc. can be added, or the selected match deleted all together.

Should user A wish to communicate with one or more of potential partners (92)  
10 selected by communications program (140), communication centre (90) can establish or enable the communication.

However, to communicate one or both parties will have had to pay a fee. This fee could be a subscription fee paid, e.g. monthly, quarterly or annually or a fee  
15 paid per transaction, i.e., each time a new contact is made. The users will be able to pay this subscription fee, for example, by debit or credit card, either on line, through a telephone line or by traditional payment routes, such as, for example, a cheque.

20 Communication centre (90) also enables users to send and receive e-mail. Communications system (120) also offers the possibility of e-mail being forwarded onto a personal e-mail address.

Referring to Figs. 12 and 13, communications program (140) has a step (200)  
25 that determines if a current user is registered. If yes, step (210) presents log on page (70). When the user has logged on, step (208) presents the current user's personal administration centre (80). If step (200) determines the current user is not registered, step (202) presents registration page (30). When registration page (30) has been completed, step (204) presents psychometric questionnaire  
30 (40), biometric questionnaire (50) and location questionnaire (60) and records the answers. Step (206) then generates the aforementioned profiles based on

the completed questionnaires and forms a personalized communication centre (80) for the current user. Step (208) then presents the current user's personal communication centre (80). Control then passes to point (13).

- 5 Referring to Fig. 13, point (13) continues to step (212) that, if a communication request is received, determines if the users have satisfied the payment requirement. If not, step (214) enables the users to satisfy the payment requirement. Step (212) is then repeated. If step (212) determines that the required fee, if any, has been paid, step (216) enables the users to  
10 communicate.

- It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that much of the data developed by communications program (140) will be stored in database (124, Fig. 11). This data includes, for example, the profiles, questionnaire answers, registration  
15 information and the like of users (128).

- The present invention having been thus described with particular reference to the preferred forms thereof, it will be obvious that various changes and modifications may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope  
20 of the present invention as defined in the appended claims.

**CLAIMS**

1. A method for facilitating communication between a plurality of users with a mutual desire to make contact, said method comprising:

(a) enabling each of said users to complete a questionnaire;

(b) generating, for each of said users, a profile based on said completed questionnaire;

(c) determining a match between a first user and a second user of said plurality of users, based on the completed questionnaires thereof; and

(d) enabling each of said first and second users to view the profiles of one another.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising (e) enabling said first and second users to communicate with one another.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein step (e) is performed only if one or both of said first and second users have satisfied a requirement.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said requirement is the payment of a fee.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein steps (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) are performed by a system; and wherein step (e) enables said first and second users to communicate with one another through said system.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said questionnaire comprises psychometric questions, biometric questions and location questions.



7. The method of claim 1, wherein said questionnaire comprises questions that are compatibility sensitive and questions that are not compatibility sensitive.
8. The method of claim 6, wherein said questionnaire is one of a plurality of questionnaires that step (a) presents to said users for completion, and wherein step (b) generates said profile based on one or more of said completed questionnaires.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein said questionnaire comprises first and second questions, wherein answers to said first questions are presented in said profile, and wherein answers to said second questions are presented in a second profile that can be accessed only by that user who completed said questionnaire.
10. The method of claim 6, further comprising (f) defining one or more non-adjacent locations based on answers to said location questions.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein said location questions are presented in the form of a map arranged on a grid comprising a network of vertical and horizontal lines, and wherein each of said users can select one or more areas within said grid as a location of interest.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein a size of said areas is user selectable.
13. The method of claim 6, wherein said psychometric questions are presented one at a time with a next question being presented only after the previous question has been answered.
14. The method of claim 6, wherein one or more of said questions are multiple choice questions that present a plurality of possible answers, and

wherein a most appropriate answer and a least appropriate answer must be selected from said plurality of possible answers of at least one of said multiple choice questions before the next question is presented.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein one or more of said multiple choice questions can be answered only by a drag and drop operation.

15. The method of claim 6, wherein the answers to said biometric questions contain information concerning said first user completing said questionnaire and information concerning another of said plurality of users of interest to said first user.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein said match is for a potential partner or date for said first user completing said questionnaire.

17. A computer for facilitating communication between a plurality of users, said computer comprising:

a processor and a memory,

a communications program stored in said memory and comprising:

first means for controlling said processor to perform a first operation that enables each of said plurality of users to complete a questionnaire;

second means for controlling said processor to perform a second operation that generates, for each of said plurality of users, a profile based on said completed questionnaire;

third means for controlling said processor to perform a third operation that determines a match between a first user and a second user of said plurality of users, based on the completed questionnaires thereof;

fourth means for controlling said processor to perform a fourth operation that enables each of said first and second users to view the profiles of one another; and

fifth means for controlling said processor to perform a fifth operation that enables said first and second users to communicate with one another.

18. A memory medium for a computer comprising:

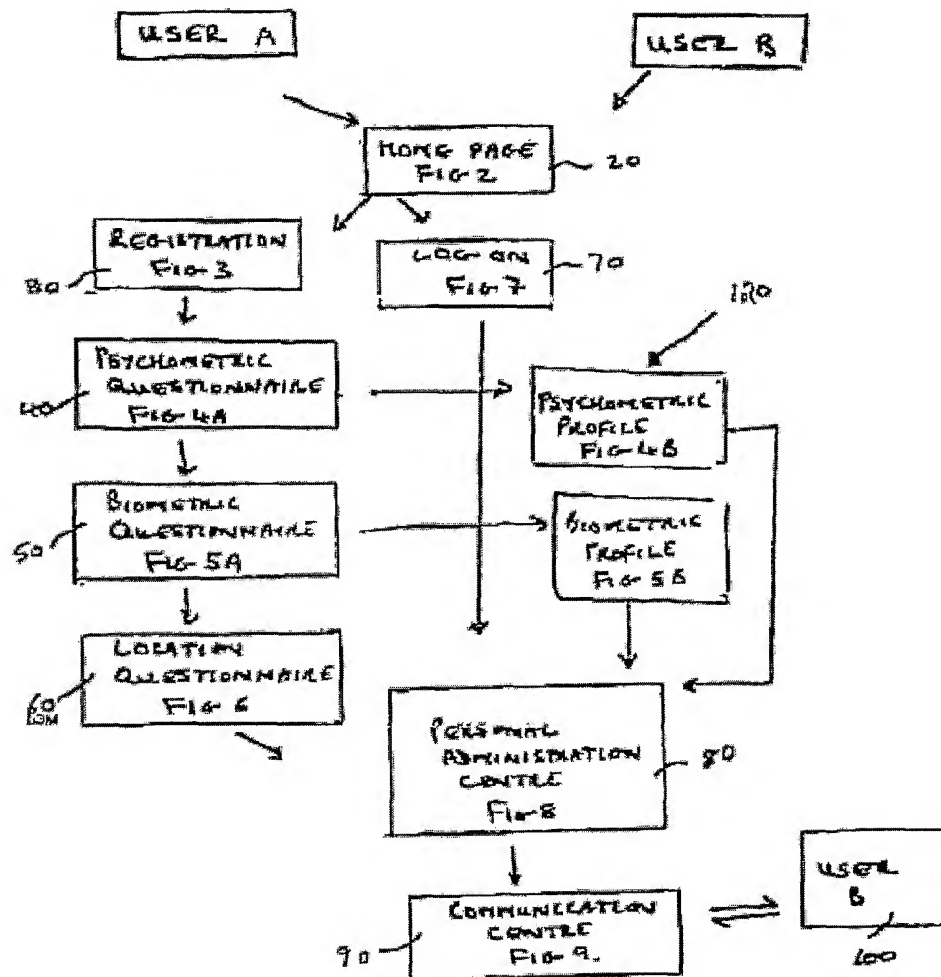
first means for controlling said computer to perform a first operation that enables each of a plurality of users to complete a questionnaire;

second means for controlling said computer to perform a second operation that generates, for each of said plurality of users, a profile based on said completed questionnaire;

third means for controlling said computer to perform a third operation that determines a match between a first user and a second user of said plurality of users, based on the completed questionnaires thereof;

fourth means for controlling said computer to perform a fourth operation that enables each of said first and second users to view the profiles of one another; and

fifth means for controlling said computer to perform a fifth operation that enables said first and second users to communicate with one another.

FIG 1.

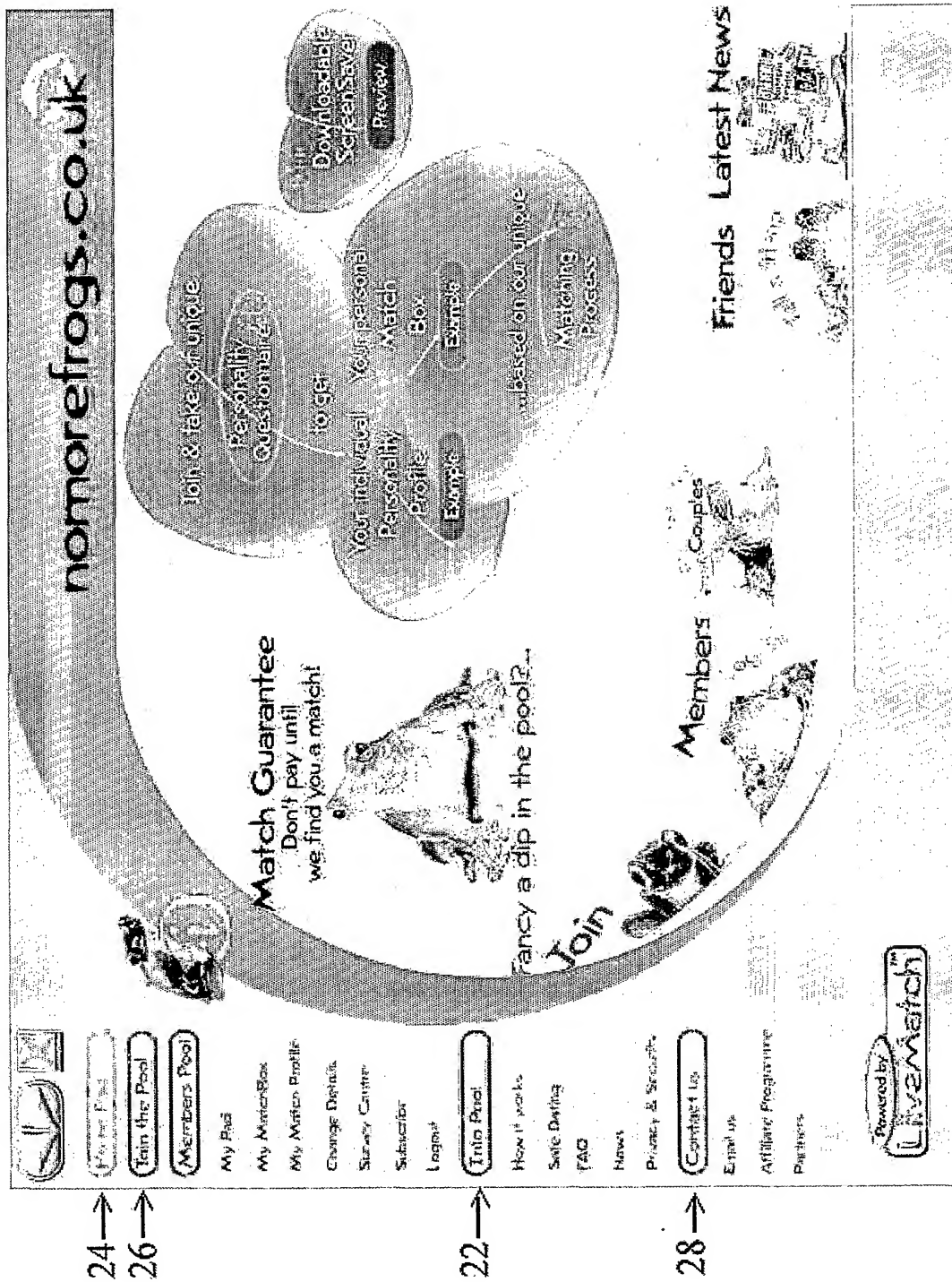
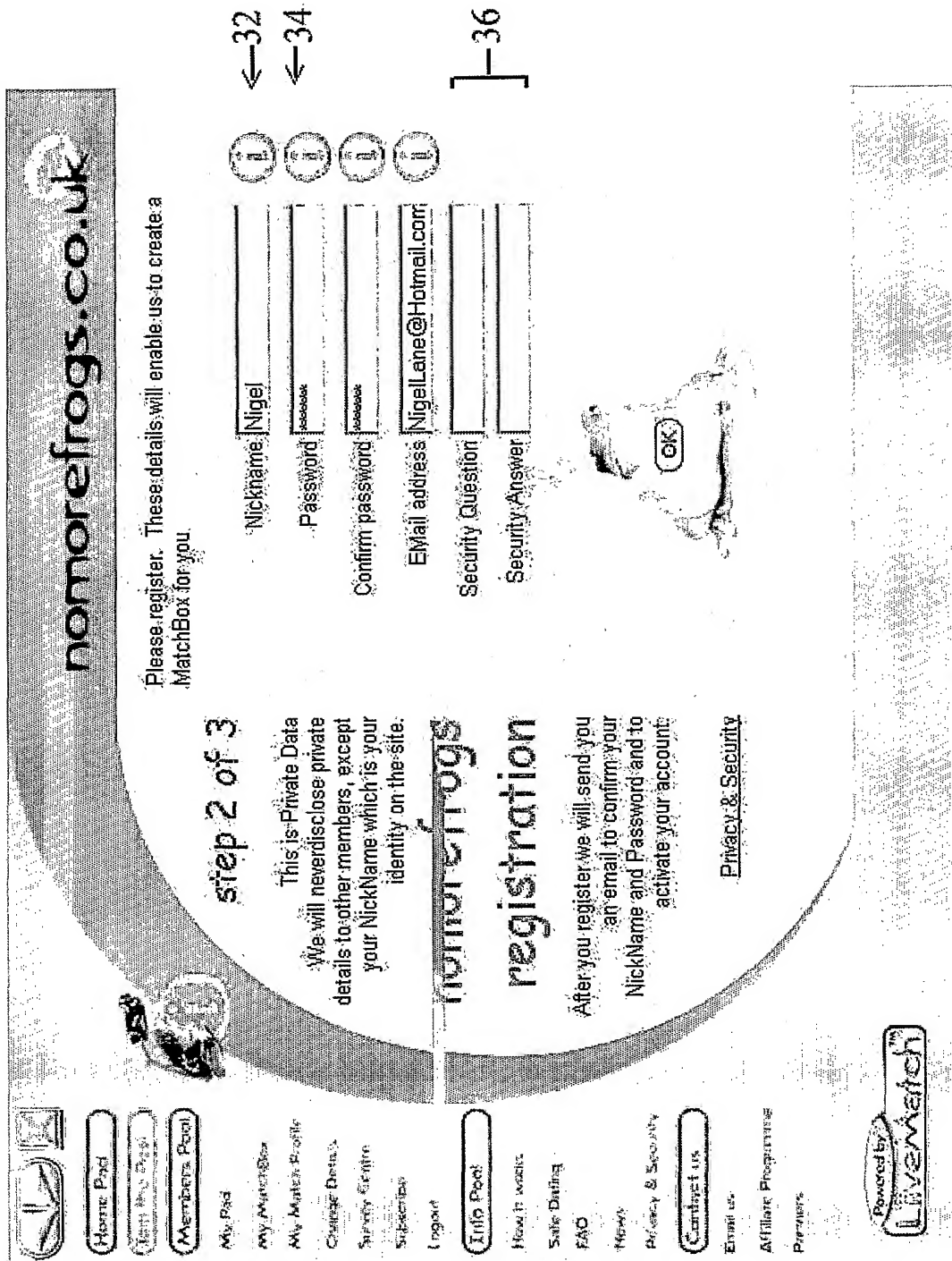


FIG 2.



**FIG. 3.**

03

nomorefrogs.co.uk

41

Home Page

How to Use Site

Members Pool

My Page

My MatchBox

My Match Profile

Change Details

Support Centre

Subscribe

Logout

Info Page

How it works

Safe Dating

FAQ

News

Privacy & Security

Contact Us

Enquiries

Affiliate Program

Partners

This is Private Data  
All details are treated in the  
strictest confidence.

## Personality Questionnaire

All content Copyright 2000  
LiveMatch Ltd All Rights  
Reserved

The questionnaire will take about 10  
minutes after which you will get  
your individual Personality Profile.  
Please answer honestly, there are  
no right or wrong answers, ...so  
don't phone a friend, ask the  
audience or try 50/50!!!  
You can stop and come  
back to it at any time.

Question 2

Drag and drop these two buttons  
onto the statements you feel most comfortable with

46 —  — 47

I am confident in offering my  
opinion

42

I have never been in love

43

Others see me as a very  
giving person

44

I find large social gatherings  
an effort

45

Save for later and continue  
later

OK

SECRET

40

FIG 4A.



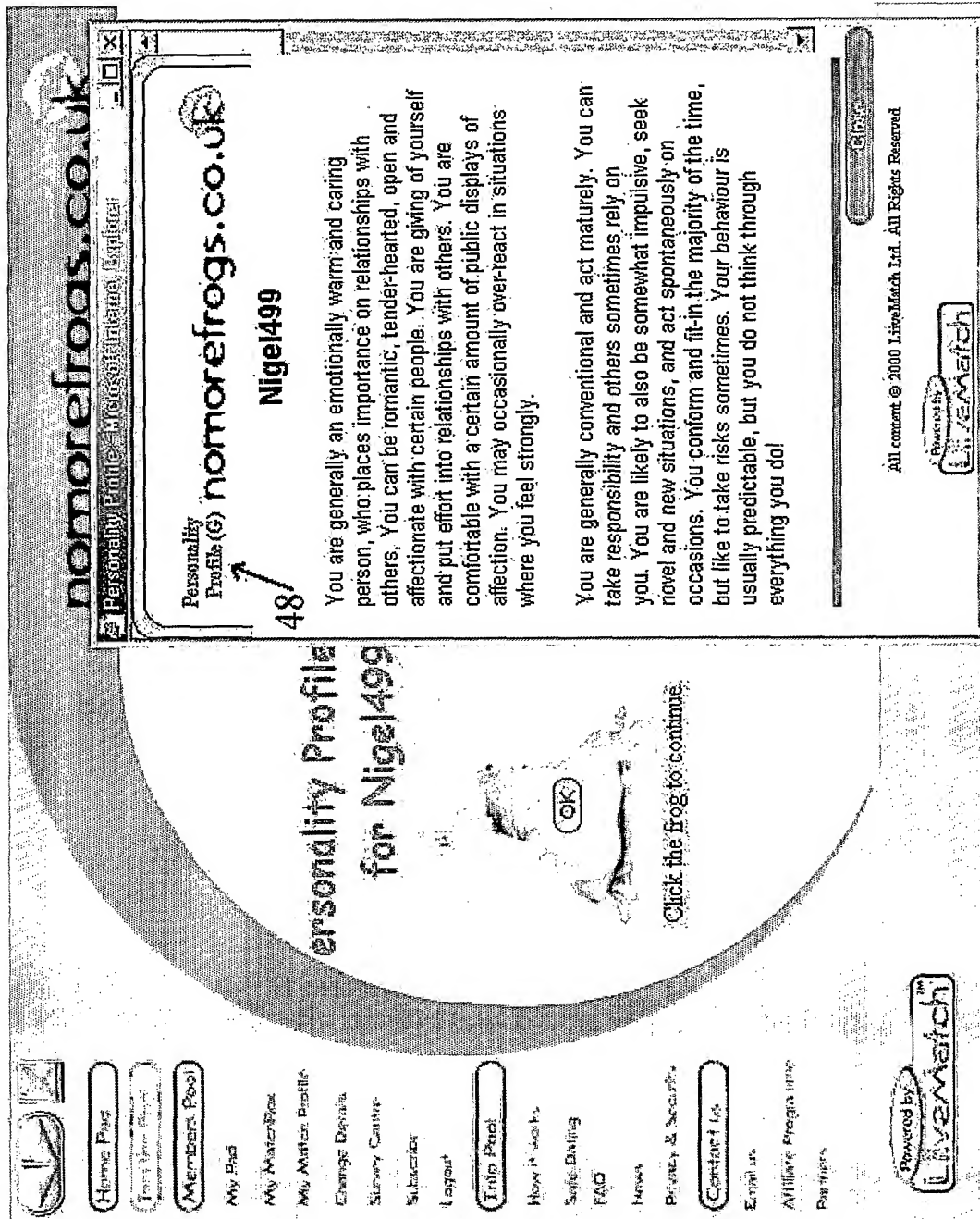


FIG 4B.

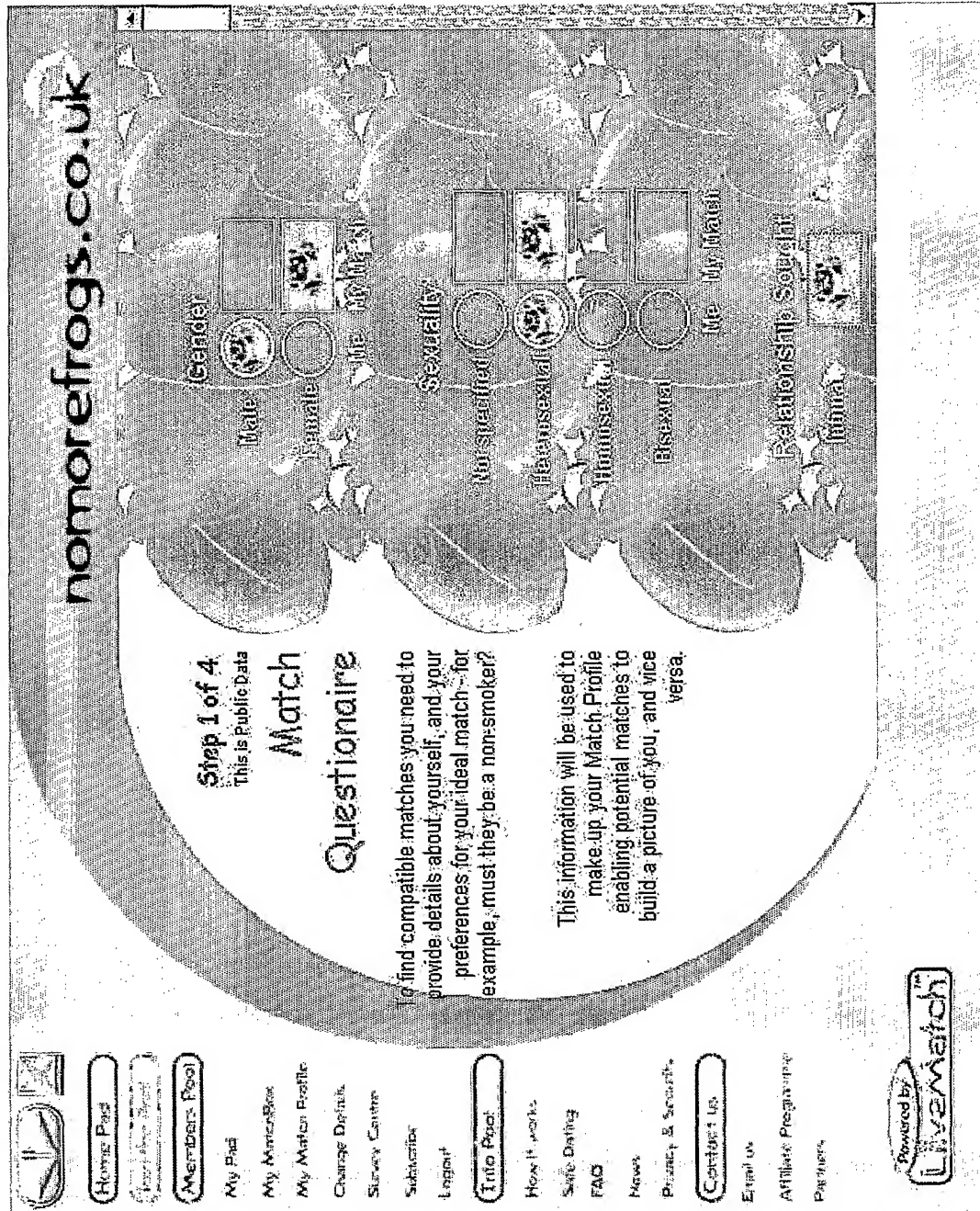


FIG 5A.

50

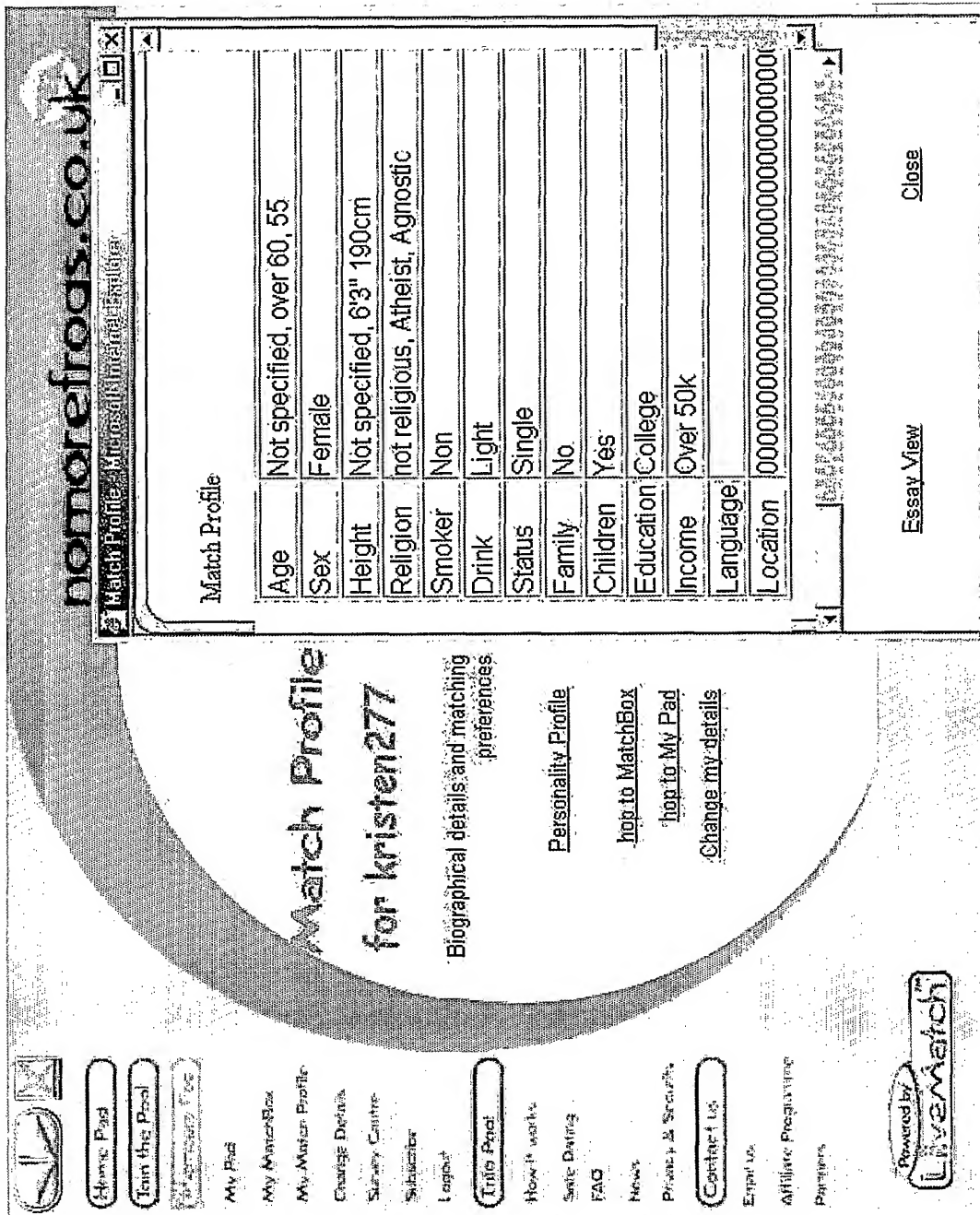


FIG 5B.

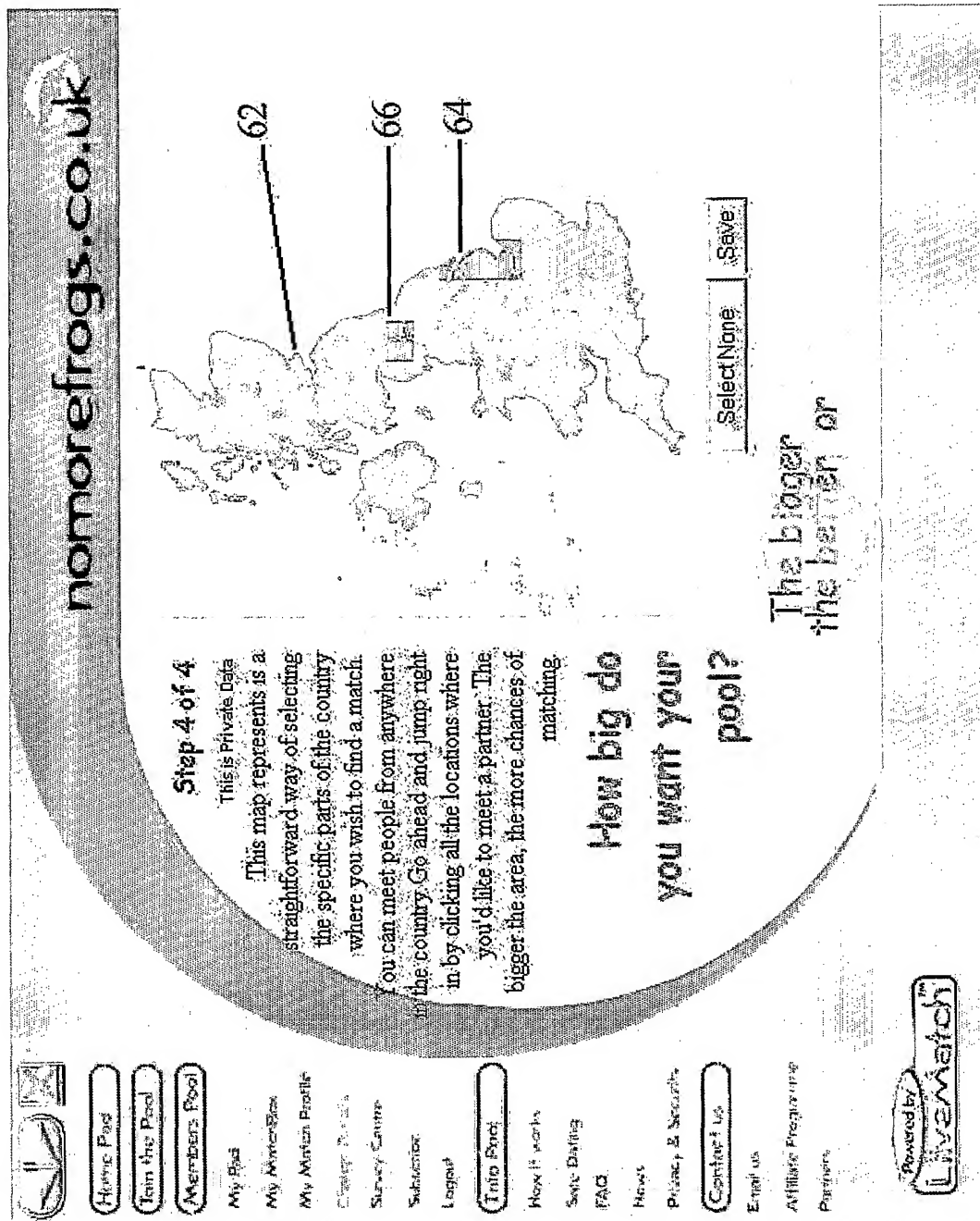


FIG 6.

60

**nomorefrogs.co.uk**

NickName: kristen277

Password: password

[Forgotten NickName/Password](#)

[Having trouble logging in? Please email the support desk](#)

[Terms & Conditions \(Last Amended: 11 July 2000\)](#)

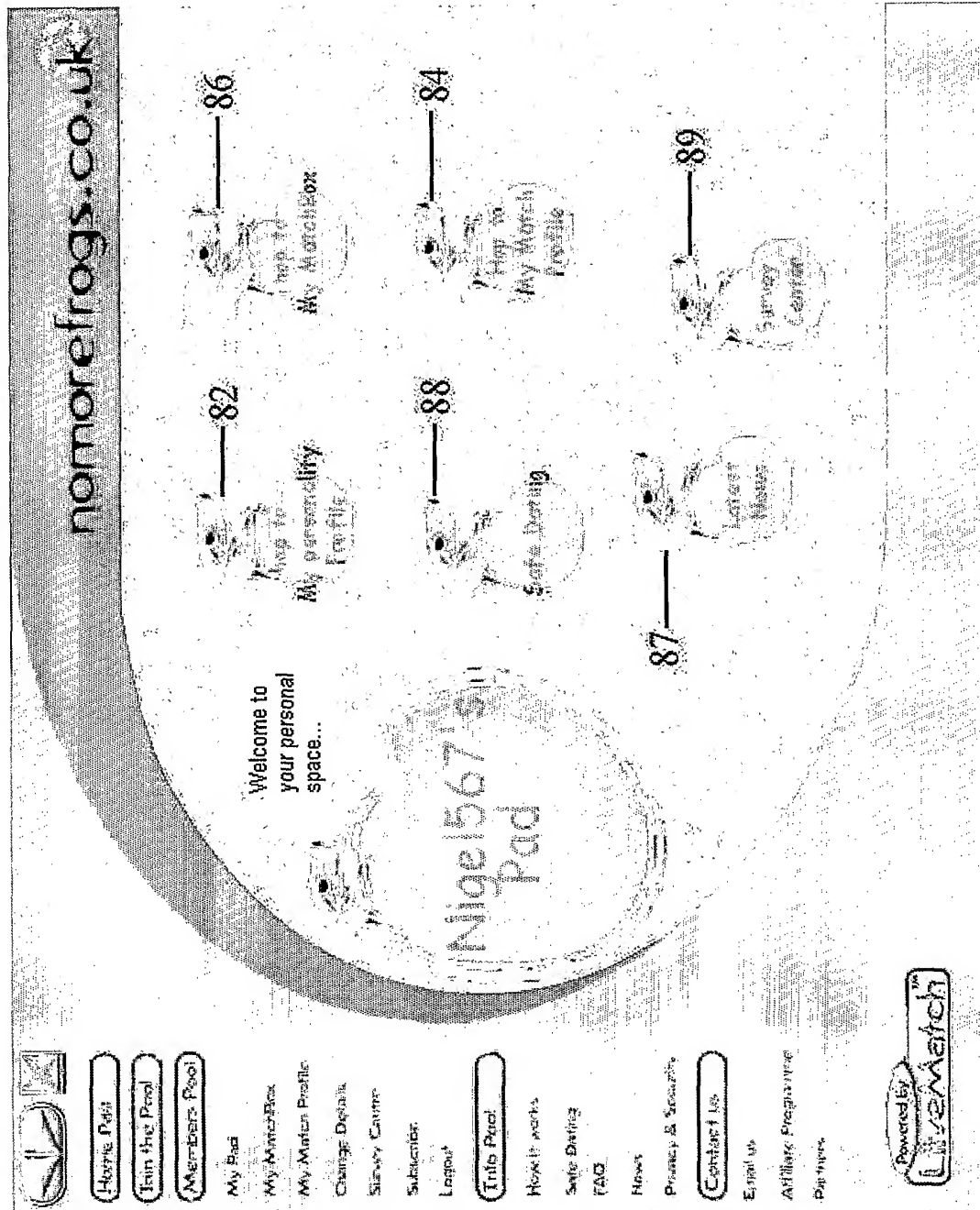
Welcome back to  
nomorefrogs...  
Please hop in

[Privacy & Security](#)

Powered by **LiveMatch**

FIG 7.

70



80

FIG 8.

nomorefrogs.co.uk



This is your individual communication center where you will find details of all the people you have been matched with.








**Matchbox**

You can rate a match with your Zing factor, browse their Match Profile by clicking on their NickName, read and send email from your MailBox.

[hop to MailBox](#)  
[hop to My Pad](#)

92 92 92

Show Me:  

Nickname	Status	Match Rating	Zing Factor
Claire552		2.0/4.0	552
Jansel724		2.0/4.0	724
Julie111		2.0/4.0	111
Julie222		2.0/4.0	222
Linda517		2.0/4.0	517
Sam664		2.0/4.0	664
Suzie972	NEW	2.0/4.0	972
Victoria862		2.0/4.0	862

90

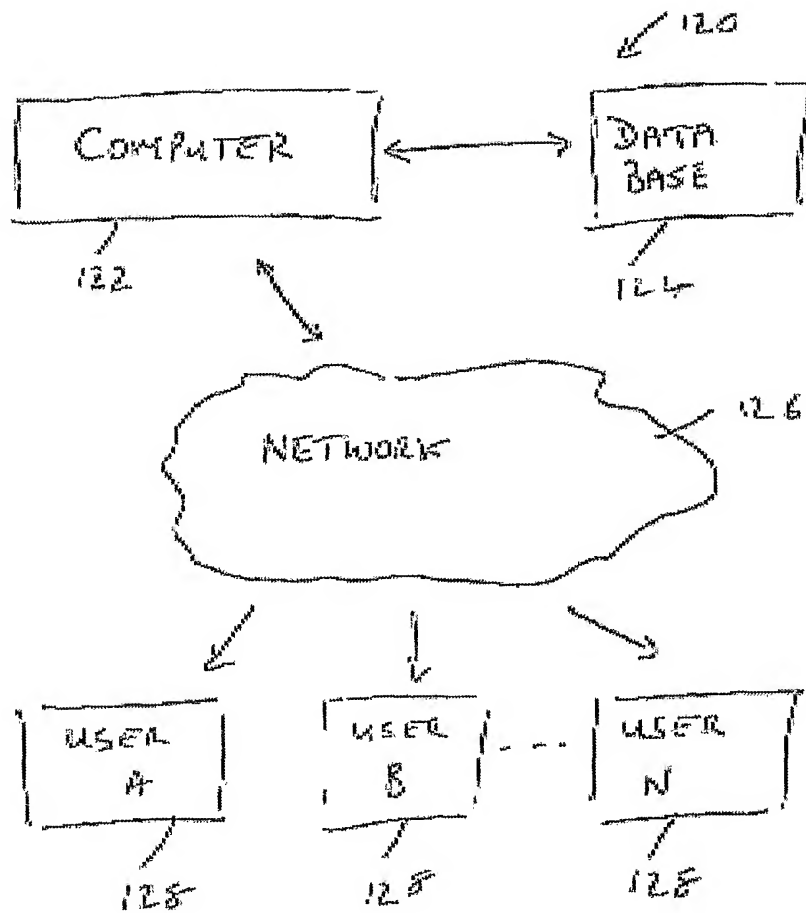


FIG 10



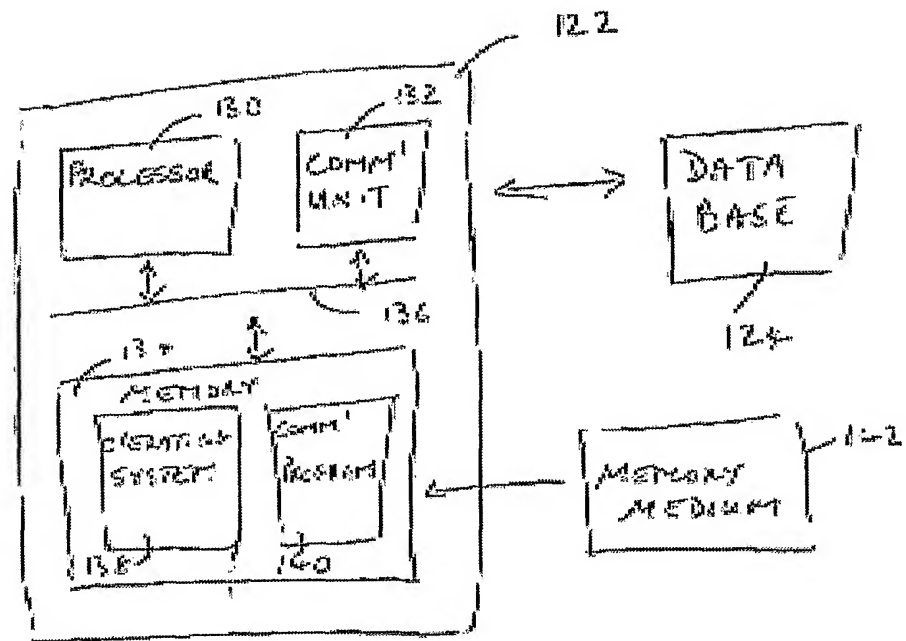


FIG. 11

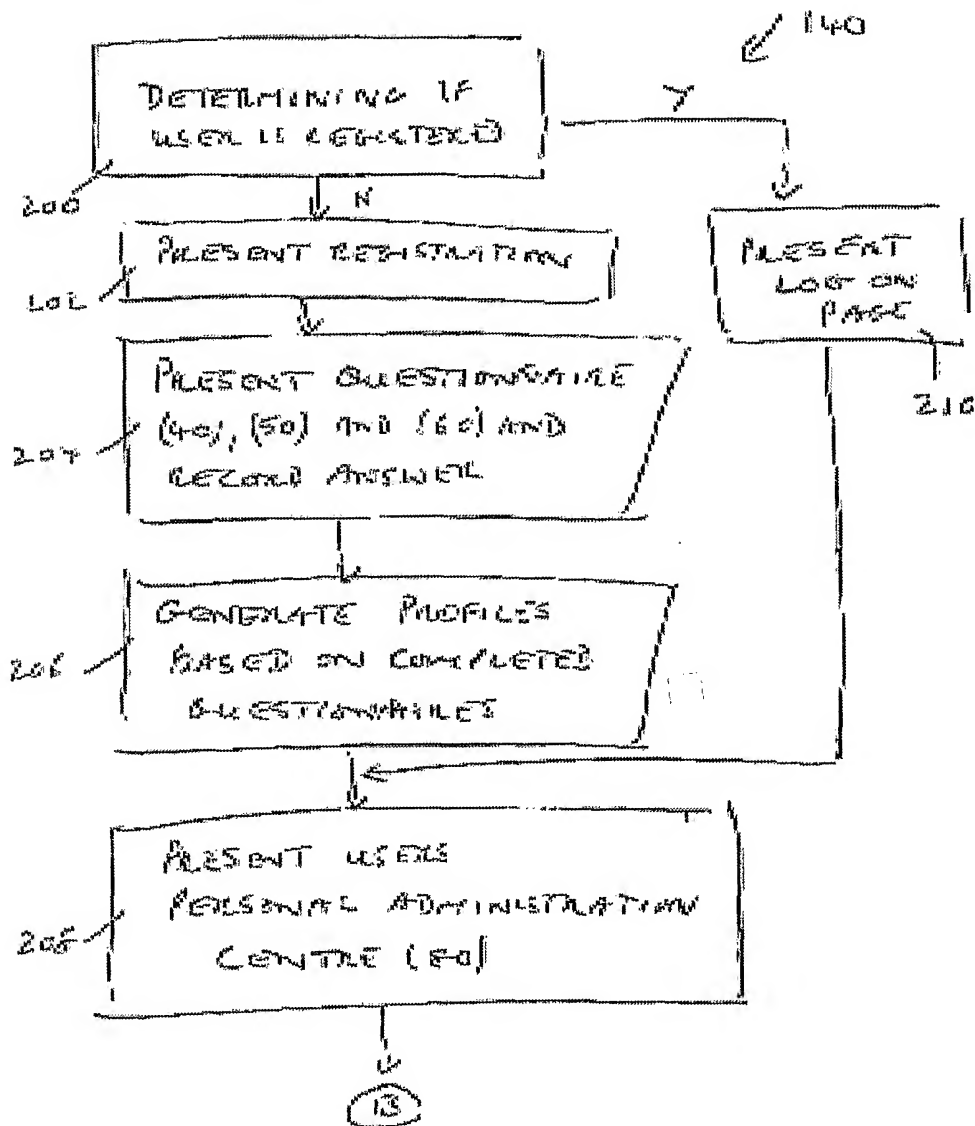


FIG 12

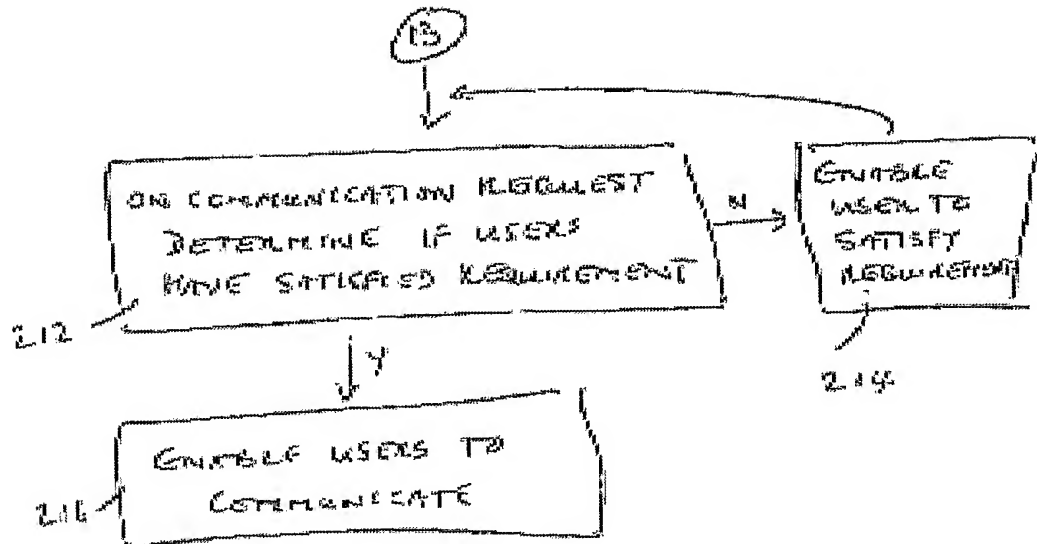


FIG 13